

BULLETIN

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URGENT NEED FOR INCREASED AND IMPROVED COCONUT PRODUCTION

Sir Datar Singh's Address to the Indian Central Coconut Committee

ADDRESSING the sixth meeting of the Indian Central Coconut Committee held at Bombay on the 28th November 1947, Sardar Bahadur Sir Datar Singh, Vice-Chairman, Indian Council of Agricultural Research and President of the Committee stressed the importance of increased and improved production of Coconuts in the Indian Dominion to bridge the gulf between supply and demand and emphasized the need to stabilize prices so that the grower could bestow undivided attention on his trees.

THE following are extracts from Sir Datar Singh's speech:-

This meeting has a special significance in that we are meeting for the first time in independent India. We are fortunate that the division of the country has not affected this Committee as much as the other sister organisations like the Cotton, Jute and Sugar-cane Committees. Out of the total production of 3,247 million nuts and 1,10,000 tons of coconut oil in India as a whole 3,361 million nuts and 1,05,000

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Sirdar Bahadur Sir Datar Singh addressing the sixth meeting of the Indian Central Coconut Committee. Seated on his right is Rao Sahib A. K. Menon, the Vice-President and on his left Sri K. Gopalan, the Secretary of the Committee.

tons of oil are produced in the Indian Dominion. This position need not however, produce any complacency. The problems of increased production and improvement of quality are as urgent and pressing as ever. The Indian Dominion has to import more than about 1,00,000 tons of copra every year and we must attain self-sufficiency in the shortest time possible.

Increased Production

This Committee has been set up as you are, of course, aware, primarily to improve and develop the production, marketing and utilization of coconuts in India. In all that we do we have to lay the utmost emphasis on increased and improved production, especially in view of the considerable gap that exists

at present between production of and demand for coconut. For improving and developing the coconut industry We have undertaken various schemes such as the distribution of improved seedlings, research in regard to cultural and manurial practices, investigation of coconut diseases and pests, etc.

Quality Seedlings

The importance of distributing seedlings of guaranteed quality for planting can hardly be exaggerated in the case of a perennial tree like the coconut. The Madras Government's comprehensive scheme for starting coconut nurseries in all the important districts of the Province which you will presently consider is, therefore, of special significance. By this scheme we will be supplying 1,60,000 plants a year from the best bearing plants and this will cover one-tenth of the total requirements of plants a year in that Province. I attach also the utmost importance to the two Central Research Stations of the Committee that are in the making. We took over from the Madras Government on the 15th November, their Coconut Research Station at Kasaragod and our idea is to develop that station by adding to its present area another 110 acres of land. We have thus at Kasaragod something going which has only to be developed.

Creeping Death

But at Kayamkulam we have had to start from scratch. An estate of 55 acres has been acquired and the found-

ation stone of the Station was laid by His Highness the Elaya Raja of Travancore. Tenders have been received for the construction of the Laboratory and Rest House. The problem of the diseases of the coconut tree has assumed very grave dimensions and the sooner it is tackled in the manner it ought to be the better. The root and leaf disease is a kind of creeping death for the coconut tree and we have on the agenda a proposal to take action to create a sanitary cordon which will prevent the spread of the disease from the present infected areas to regions which are disease-free.

But all these schemes, excellent in themselves and bound to yield results in due course of time, are but schemes yet, and like fine words butter no parsnips. That, of course, may not be my point of view but I am trying to look at the whole thing from the point of view of the ultimate person affected, namely, the coconut grower. Unless we succeed to keep his interest in coconut cultivation sustained and alive and help him to get better returns for his labours, our own labours would have been in vain.

Public Co-operation

At the last meeting you decided to launch a "Grow More Coconut" campaign. I, however, feel that such a campaign ought to be planned more systematically and in a manner calculated to evoke public enthusiasm. It is no good to leave it entirely to the departmental agencies. I would, therefore, urge that the non-official members of this Committee should make some useful suggestions which, while ap-

pealing to popular imagination, would produce concrete results of practical value. I feel that for the "Grow More Coconut" campaign to succeed there ought to be a large number of growers' associations all over the coconut growing areas which should act as high tension lines to transmit to its members the energy of the ideas emanating from brains departmental and otherwise.

The Price Position

Before concluding I would like to touch upon the price situation which has such an important bearing on the grower's response to any idea that may be presented to him. This time last year the prices of copra, coconut oil, coconuts and coconut oil cake were soaring up. There was a persistent demand from consumers for price control and after some warnings from the Government of India the prices of copra and coconut oil were controlled in December 1946. The ceiling and floor prices of copra and coconut oil were fixed as follows:—

Ceiling prices of copra per ton.

At Cochin	....	Rs. 884
„ Madras	....	„ 936
„ Bombay	....	„ 934
„ Calcutta	....	„ 978
„ Karachi	....	„ 948

Ceiling prices of coconut oil per ton

At Cochin	....	Rs. 1,390
„ Madras	....	„ 1,456

„ Bombay	....	„ 1,462
„ Calcutta	....	„ 1,483
„ Karachi	....	„ 1,475

The floor prices in the producing areas were fixed at Rs. 800/- per ton of copra and Rs. 1,230 per ton of coconut oil. The movement of these commodities was also controlled. But the introduction of control was soon followed by a demand for decontrol. At your last meeting, you passed a resolution to that effect and the control was lifted on the 20th June, 1947. This naturally resulted in the rise of prices which shot up to Rs. 2,014/- although later in July they came down to near about Rs. 1,880/-. In August, prices declined slowly and steadily due to short demand of oil by the soap industry on account of short supply of caustic soda and transport difficulties. Towards the end of the month, oil in Cochin was quoted at Rs. 1,730/- per ton. September registered a still further decline for the same reasons. The month-end saw oil being quoted at Rs. 1,330/- in the Cochin market. Throughout October and November, too, prices have declined. October ended with the price of oil at Rs. 1,261 per ton. The latest available quotation is Rs. 1,270-4-0. Although the matter is not on the agenda before you, I am sure we shall have to tackle the problem of stabilising prices at a reasonable level so that the grower could be induced to bestow undivided attention on his trees. Perhaps a small special sub-committee could go into the whole question and report at the next meeting.



My Observations on the Coconut Palm

(BY SRI M. ANANDAN, L. Ag., H.Q. DY. DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE, MADRAS)

THERE are just over 6 lakhs of acres under this important oilseed crop in this province. More than half of this acreage is confined to Malabar District, as the area claimed by that district is 3,69,615 acres out of a total of 6,13,00 acres. East Godavari, South Kanara and Tanjore are the next most important coconut growing areas in the province. Other districts have areas ranging from one acre in the Nilgiris to 15,000 acres in Vizag.

Growth Habits of the Palms

I do not know whether you have observed the different growth habits of the three well-known palms of South India viz., coconut, arecanut and the palmyrrah. Of these three palms, coconut is more sensitive to the presence of other kinds of trees than the other two palms. If you plant a coconut tree under a spreading mango or jack tree, the coconut plant tries to avoid the mango or jack tree and in its attempts to do so, the trunk gets bent to the extent necessary to come out of the influence of the over-hanging, rather, the overbearing tree, while the areca and the palmyrrah do not mind the shade of, or the obstruction caused by, such trees, as you would have noticed these palms always growing straight piercing

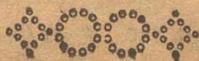
through the canopy of the mango or jack tree, if need be. This habit may perhaps be partly related to the size of the crowns of these palms.

Interspacing

The leaves carried on the coconut tree crown will be anything from 12 to 14ft. in length, while the leaves of the palmyrrah palm will not exceed 4 to 4½ft. and that of arecanut palm 5ft. in length. It is more or less on the basis of the size of the crowns of these palms that their planting distance is determined. If that is so, the palmyrrah tree should be planted 8ft. either way, arecanut 10ft. and the coconut palm between 24 to 28ft. And according to this principle of spacing, the number of trees to be planted in an acre will roughly be as follows:

Palmyrrah	....	725	Trees
Arecanut	....	500	"
Coconut	....	70	"

In actual practice we find that growers do not conform to this principle of spacing indicated by the palms, particularly their crowns. You might have seen arecanut and palmyrrah planted 3ft. apart and coconut 10ft. apart in many parts of this country.



Coconut Cultivation

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We shall now consider the seasons in which manure should be applied to the coconut tree and in what all ways it should be done. The best period for manuring is just after the south-west monsoon rains and before the commencement of the north-east monsoons. If it is applied at the height of the monsoons it is liable to be washed away. It would, therefore, be advisable to apply the manure by the middle of August.

Researches at the Kasaragod Coconut Research Farm have shown that a coconut tree puts forth 2000 to 7000 roots and that they reach out to a distance of 45ft. Roots can draw in sustenance only through their tender extremities. Disregarding this point coconut growers generally dig trenches immediately round the base of the trees to apply the manure. This, not only does not do much good to the tree, but the base of the trunk gets overgrown with roots above the soil surface and the tree gradually becomes useless. Therefore, manure trenches should be dug at least a foot away from the tree base and as broad as possible.

Applying the Manure

At Kasaragod experiments were conducted both in regard to the method of applying manure in trenches and broadcasting it in the garden and ploughing it in. Trenches were 6, 9 and 12 ft. in width. It was observed that the wider the trenches the better was the yield and that the best results could be had by applying the manure broadcast. It is, therefore, im-

portant that manure trenches should be as broad as possible. It would also be advantageous to sow once a year in the garden some legumin or sunnhemp and when it begins to flower to plough it into the soil. This process not only adds to the fertility of the soil, but also helps it to remain loose and absorb water. It also improves considerably the texture of the soil.

You may have observed in some rubber gardens a plant called thephrosia grown in rows. This plant has a luxuriant growth and can resist drought. If planted in hedgerows it makes the hedges strong. Planted on the edges of bunds and dams it keeps them firm. The leaves of this plant could be applied as a manure to the coconut tree. How this plant is grown for this purpose may be seen at the Vyttila coconut farm.

Ploughing the Soil

Wherever possible it will be useful to water the gardens during the summer. After applying the manure by about the middle of August the soil should be turned up with the spade and heaped in mounds. By doing this, the soil gets aerated and the roots of the coconut do not have to come to the surface.

In the interior, the gardens are ploughed both before and after the north-east monsoons. This is done in order to conserve the moisture in the soil. It has been proved by experience that ploughing

The Arsikere Coconut and Copra Marketing Co-operative Society

(FROM THE CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, MYSORE)

THE region covered by the following Taluqs forms the coconut belt:-

1. Arsikere and Channarayapatna in Hassan District.
2. Tiptur, Turuvekere and Chikkanahalli in Turuvekere District.
3. Kadur Taluk in Chikmagalur District.

Of these, Arsikere and Tiptur are the most important centres of production and trade for coconut and copra. The trade in both the centres is concentrated in the hands of several moneyed middlemen to whom the coconut growers are invariably indebted, with the result the growers are entirely dependent upon the creditors for disposal of their produce. The cultivator

the soil is more important than even manuring.

In certain good soils the coconut tree begins to bear in the fifth year. In clayey soils it begins to bear in seven to ten years, and in soils which are not loamy from fifteen to twenty years. The coconut tree comes to full bearing about five years after the first fruits.

If, as indicated above, manuring and intercultivation are done annually one can get every year 60 to 100 nuts from each tree. If these processes are neglected in any one year the yield will suffer during the next three years.

It is always better to harvest the nuts when they are fully ripe. It takes about 12 months for the nuts to get fully mature. In our part of the country (West Coast) the nuts could be harvested eight times a year at intervals of about forty days.

Underplanting

In old gardens new seedlings could be planted a little away from trees which

are 60 to 70 years old. This is known as underplanting. Aged trees which hardly yield ten nuts a year should be cut down and removed. This will give ample scope for the new trees to grow. Underplanting should not be done among trees which are only 30-40 years old. But there is no harm in underplanting among trees of this age group if they are on the banks of rivers, as their life is limited to that period.

Co-operative Action

One cannot emphasise too much the value of co-operative action on the part of coconut growers not only in regard to fighting pests and diseases, but in many other matters too. The officers of the Agriculture Department can at best tender advice and give demonstrations. Translating that advice into action and taking advantage of those demonstrations rest with the growers. If coconut gardens are properly looked after one may be assured on an average of an annual income of Rs. 100/- per acre. (Concluded)

—From an article by Mr. Gopala Marar, Economic Botanist, Cochin State

is at present prevented from getting full value for his produce on account of the fact, that the middlemen charge an unduly heavy commission and other charges. The havoc played by these middlemen was so great that it was found necessary to organise a society to deal exclusively with marketing of coconut, copra and other allied products.

A Co-operative Society was, therefore, registered on the 19th August 1942, (Reg. No. 1574) with jurisdiction over the whole Arsikere Taluk. Later on the jurisdiction was extended to the various other Taluks referred to in the introductory paragraph.

The main objects of the society are the following:—

- (a) To help the coconut growers in marketing their coconuts and copra at the best possible market rates.
- (b) To promote the Coir industry and the development of subsidiary industries such as oil pressing etc.
- (c) To finance members on the security of stock lodged by them.

Capital

The authorised share capital of the society is Rs. 50,000 made up of 5,000 shares of Rs. 10/- each, the share calls being payable in monthly instalments of Rs. 2-8-0 each. The maximum number of shares that a member could subscribe is 50 (Rs. 500/-). Besides the share capital, the society obtains financial assistance

from the Mysore Provincial Co-operative Apex Bank Ltd., Bangalore.

The membership of the society is open to the coconut garden owners.

The society grants advances to the members up to 75% of the market value of the stock deposited by them. This advance will be recovered from the sale proceeds of the members' stock. Interest is charged at 6% per annum on the money so advanced.

The society started work on the 11th November 1942. It has at present a membership of 161; a paid up share capital of Rs. 6,114-7-0.

The society has been given the services of one Inspector of the Department and he is assisted by one clerk and one servant.

Administration

The executive functions of the society are vested in a committee consisting of 15 members of whom the Deputy Commissioner, Hassan District is the Ex-Officio President and the Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Hassan Division and the Amildar, Arsikere Taluk are Ex-Officio Vice-Presidents. The Government have lent the services of a Departmental Inspector to work as Secretary of the Society. There is also a standing committee of two Directors to advise the Secretary on marketing coconuts and copra and other important matters.

A comparative statement showing the progress achieved by the society from its inception is appended.

